Business Plan for Voluntary Planning
2002—2003

Mission

To measurably improve the social and economic well being of all Nova Scotians by providing the Premier and Cabinet with valuable volunteer and citizen-based advice on relevant policy issues for today and for the future.

Planning Context

The province's fiscal situation is a challenge well known to government. Many issues, including an onerous legacy of debt from years past, combine to make it hard to know even where to start when it comes to improving the fiscal circumstance.

One of the common characteristics of governments in the Canadian democracy is that they have difficulty in dealing in the long-term, that is, 10-15 years ahead. The many matters, issues, and problems that require immediate reaction and attention and tend to consume people's focus and energy. Additionally, there is the five-year electoral cycle which includes settling in, governing, and campaigning. This also makes it difficult to make long-term planning a priority.

The business of government is carried on and delivered, to a great extent, by the departmental organizations. This arrangement, by its nature, tends to focus more on implementing legislated or otherwise mandated department business. Many issues, both existing and emerging, being cross-societal or horizontal in nature, take special effort to properly address such issues for policy setting purposes.

Voluntary Planning is now well-designed and well positioned to help with these two areas of horizontality and long-term planning. Voluntary Planning, through its excellent cadre of volunteer citizen leaders and experts, can readily address matters of strategic importance to the province and provide sound advice on policy options to government decision-makers.

Government is striving to be more open, transparent, and accountable. If successful in these efforts, tremendous benefits can be achieved through increased confidence and trust between citizens, stakeholders, politicians, and government leaders. An exceptional approach to making this happen involves citizen participation and collaborative policy development.

Involvement of the private or non-governmental sectors and citizens at the outset of any thinking on new policies results in better decision making, consensus, buy-in, lower implementation costs, trust, credibility and confidence. Over time, and if applied consistently, this way of doing business will improve democracy and consistently attract strong candidates for public office.

Voluntary Planning's system of consulting, researching, and engaging the best people on the complex issues of the day offers a highly attractive, cost-effective approach to policy development. In the recent past, we have tackled fiscal management and non-resident land ownership. In the future, it is possible for Voluntary Planning to become involved with the development of provincial strategies on lifelong learning, labour market, immigration, health care, or a vision for the province, as examples.

Voluntary Planning has recently named an eminent new board of directors and excellent leaders of six new sector teams. Strong support from the political level and a new reporting relationship with Treasury & Policy Board augers well for Voluntary Planning's ability to make a valuable contribution to the direction of policy in Nova Scotia.

Strategic Goals

- Improve quality of life for Nova Scotians
- Contribute to enhanced government policy and legislation
- Ensure direct citizen participation in policy development
- Address long-term priorities – uniquely
- Provide value and relevance to government and citizens

Core Business Area

Voluntary Planning has a single core business, that being to enhance democracy and improve the quality of life for Nova Scotians by engaging knowledgeable volunteer members and citizens in the formulation of policy advice to the Premier and Cabinet.

Operationally, Voluntary Planning does this in three distinct ways:

1. Major Task Forces

In recent years, Voluntary Planning has accepted several major projects assigned by the provincial government. The Fiscal Management Task Force and, more recently, the Non-Resident Land Ownership Task Force are two examples.

In both cases, Voluntary Planning recruited a committee of knowledgeable volunteers to thoroughly research the subject, give all Nova Scotians an opportunity to provide input and comment, and produce their best advice in the form of recommendations.

This is an extremely effective way to reach sound and broadly accepted strategies on complex public policy issues. The Voluntary Planning process considers the long-term benefit of the entire province and takes full advantage of the opportunity to increase public knowledge and awareness on the issue at hand.

Major Task Force Priorities

- **New Task Force**

  Propose several and conduct at least one major task force project in 2002—2003.

- **Fiscal Management Task Force Review**

  Citizens in general and task force members need a formal and transparent procedure to ascertain how their advice is being received and acted upon by government. This is essential for our business planning process as it will allow us to measure our impact.

  Depending on board decision, this task force will re-assemble for the purpose of following up on its recommendations made in the year 2000. This action will address the issue of accountability and move away from any notion that Voluntary Planning projects end with the printing of a report.

2. Sectors

To fulfill Voluntary Planning's promise as a valuable and influential contributor to policy making in Nova Scotia, the board of directors relies heavily on the advice provided by six teams of senior policy advisors, known as sectors. These newly formed sectors are replacing Voluntary Planning's former committees and will better position the organization to cover the entire spectrum of society.

Led by the chairperson, each member will contribute to an environmental scanning process and participate in discussions resulting in policy briefings or proposals. A major emphasis for each sector will be an annual presentation to the board during which time they will bring forward their most immediate and pressing priorities.

Throughout the year, members of each sector will take full advantage of teleconferencing and web-based collaboration, meeting when necessary.

Sector chairs and members are invited to make special efforts to assist Voluntary Planning with assigned projects. They can do this by offering to participate directly, helping in efforts to engage their particular sector, or by conducting focused research.

Sector Priorities

- Fully Operational Sectors

Recruit volunteers and fully activate the following six sectors during the current year, pending approval of this structure by Cabinet.
Natural Resources
Fiscal Management Policy

Education and Lifelong Learning
Economic Growth and Competitiveness
Environmental Quality and Stewardship
Health and Social Well-being

3. Board Leadership

Voluntary Planning has appointed a new board of directors. This eminent group will be key to successfully achieving our organizational goals.

Board Priorities

- **Position as Advisors**
  Offer advice directly to the Premier and Cabinet as requested.

- **New Project Work**
  Bring proposals and advice forward to government. Negotiate terms of reference for new project work.

- **Higher profile**
  Authorize a promotions approach that helps Voluntary Planning adopt a higher profile within Nova Scotia

- **Information Technology**
  Identify and implement web-based collaboration with geographically diverse groups.

Budget Context 2002—2003

Core Budget	Subtotal	Admin. & Support	Salaries & Benefits	Operations
* Major Task Force	184k	14k	170k	nil
Sectors	125k	10k	75k	40k
Board	70k	10k	45k	15k
Total	**379k**	34k	290k	55k

* **A major project for this year has been broadly defined, and the specific topic will be established during the spring of 2002.**

Voluntary Planning will contribute resources directly to major task force efforts in the form of office administration and support as well as salaries and benefits for applicable Voluntary Planning staff assigned to the project.

Indirectly, Voluntary Planning will engage up to twelve individuals from the private and non-governmental sector who volunteer their time and talents in order to give back to society and make Nova Scotia a better place to live, work, and play. These great people, routinely dedicate thousands of hours to these efforts.

All operations costs for major task force initiatives must come from outside of Voluntary Planning's core budget. Treasury and Policy Board and one or more departments must budget for the required funding.

Outcome Measures Template

Core Business Area: Citizen Participation in the Formulation of Policy Advice to Premier & Cabinet					
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2004—2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Raise awareness, education, and participation by citizens on specific pressing issues.	The participation level of those who have thoughtfully considered the issue.	# of informed comments received on issues under consideration.	To be established (2002—2003)	1200 per year	Adopt a higher profile.
	The degree to which the media has been prompted to participate thoughtfully in the discussion of an issue.	# of editorials, articles, radio or TV presentations prompted on issues under consideration.	To be established (2002—2003)	30 per year	Intensive use of IT to solicit public response.
					Negotiate major Task Force work.
					Fully activate six societal sectors with full membership.

Outcome Measures Template

Core Business Area: Citizen Participation in the Formulation of Public Policy Advice to Premier & Cabinet					
Outcome	**Indicator**	**Measure**	**Base Year**	**Target 2004—2005**	**Strategies to Achieve Target**
Impact on Public Policy in Nova Scotia	Adoption level of advice provided to Premier & Cabinet	Degree and potential effect of advice adopted by the provincial government	To be established (2002—2003)		Targets and strategies to measure the impact of Voluntary Planning's policy advice to government will be developed during the 2002—2003 year.
	Level to which adopted policy advice has been implemented	Degree and potential effect of adopted policy advice implemented by the provincial government	To be established (2002—2003)		